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## 'Locked together in one nest':

### The Limitless Polysemy of Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

Haythem Bastawy<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract:

Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has been the subject of critical debate since Victorian times. Any interpretation of *Goblin Market* appears to be plausible, but no one single reading successfully becomes the 'one right total meaning' of the text. For instance, Gilbert and Gubar combine feminist and psycho-analytical readings of the text, alluding briefly to the sexual and religious meanings, but completely overlooking its Marxist and queer implications. In an authoritative tone they state, 'Obviously the conscious or semi-conscious allegorical intention of this narrative poem is sexual/religious.'<sup>2</sup> Helsinger, on the other hand, mainly concentrates on 'women's relation' to the 'male marketplace' without being drawn to any of the religious references in Laura's temptation, the sexual and queer imagery used in depicting the sisters' solidarity, or the uncanny nature of the goblins.<sup>3</sup> Even Campbell's ambitious attempt at a feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic reading falls short of recognizing any religious or sexual value to the poem.<sup>4</sup> I argue in the present paper that a psycho-analytic reading of Rossetti's *Goblin Market* could successfully sustain itself, combining elements of Marxist, feminist, religious, sexual and queer readings under the banner of the unconscious.

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<sup>2</sup> S. M. Gilbert & S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 564-75, p. 566.

<sup>3</sup> E. K. Helsinger, 'Consumer Power and the Utopia of Desire: Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"', *ELH*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 903-33.

<sup>4</sup> E. Campbell, 'Of Mothers and Merchants: Female Economics in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 33 Issue 3 (Spring 1990), pp. 393-410.

## 'Locked together in one nest':

### The Limitless Polysemy of Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has been the subject of various readings by numerous critics from several approaches since Victorian times. In *Literary Theories*, Julian Wolfreys and William Baker define a text of such a fecund nature as 'an over-determined text' which is 'not ostensibly resistant to a form of interpretation.'<sup>5</sup> Any interpretation of the *Goblin Market* appears to be plausible, but no one single reading successfully becomes the 'one right total meaning' of the text. For instance, Gilbert and Gubar combine feminist and psycho-analytical readings of the text, alluding briefly to the sexual and religious meanings, but completely overlooking its Marxist and queer implications. In an authoritative tone they state, 'Obviously the conscious or semi-conscious allegorical intention of this narrative poem is sexual/religious.'<sup>6</sup> Helsinger, on the other hand, mainly concentrates on 'women's relation' to the 'male marketplace' without being drawn to any of the religious references in Laura's temptation, the sexual and queer imagery used in depicting the sisters' solidarity, or the uncanny nature of the goblins.<sup>7</sup> Even Campbell's ambitious attempt at a feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic reading falls short of recognizing any religious or sexual value to the poem.<sup>8</sup> I will argue here that a psycho-analytic reading of the *Goblin Market* could successfully sustain itself, combining elements of Marxist, feminist, religious, erotic and queer readings under the banner of the unconscious.

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<sup>5</sup> Wolfreys and Baker, eds., *Literary Theories: A Case Study in Critical Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 11.

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfreys and Baker, eds., *Literary Theories: A Case Study in Critical Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 11.

implications. In an authoritative tone they state, ‘Obviously the conscious or semi-conscious allegorical intention of this narrative poem is sexual/religious.’<sup>10</sup> Helsinger, on the other hand, mainly concentrates on ‘women’s relation’ to the ‘male marketplace’ without being drawn to any of the religious references in Laura’s temptation, the sexual and queer imagery used in depicting the sisters’ solidarity, or the uncanny nature of the goblins.<sup>11</sup> Even Campbell’s ambitious attempt at a feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic reading falls short of recognizing any religious or sexual value to the poem.<sup>12</sup> I will argue here that a psycho-analytic reading of the *Goblin Market* could successfully sustain itself, combining elements of Marxist, feminist, religious, sexual and queer readings under the banner of the unconscious.

There are many indications within and without the poem that suggest and support reading it as an unconscious expression of suppressed fears and desires by Rossetti. First of all, signifiers of the dream quality of the story within the poem are very predominant from the start. The poem opens with ‘morning and evening / maids heard the goblins cry’<sup>13</sup>. The mornings and the evenings are two points of time associated with sleep. In other words, they are two points of time when one is in a trance-like state between waking and sleeping and actions that take place within this state of sleepiness tend to be blurred, neither real nor imaginary and could well be dreams. Indeed towards the end of the poem ‘Laura awoke as from a dream’ (*GM*, 537). Secondly, Christina Rossetti, as V. Mendoza explains, has described the poem as a fairy tale and emphasised reading it on its own terms, insisting that “‘the poem was not an allegory’” that the poem was only a story, utterly without “‘any profound or ulterior meaning’”.<sup>14</sup> Her brother mentions in his notes to a post-humus edition of her poems, ‘I have more than once heard Christina say that she did not mean anything profound by this fairy tale.’<sup>15</sup> Since the author denies any deeper meaning to the poem, a psycho-analytic reading of *Goblin Market* is necessary to bypass the author’s negation and validate the feminist, Marxist, religious, queer and erotic readings of the themes and imagery her best poem suggests.

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<sup>10</sup> S. M. Gilbert & S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 564-75, (p. 566).

<sup>11</sup> E. K. Helsinger, ‘Consumer Power and the Utopia of Desire: Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”’, *ELH*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter, 1991), 903-33.

<sup>12</sup> E. Campbell, ‘Of Mothers and Merchants: Female Economics in Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’’, *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 33 Issue 3 (Spring 1990), 393-410.

<sup>13</sup> Christina Rossetti, *Selected Poems: Rossetti* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 67. Further referencing to the poem will be between brackets, using the initials of the poem and the line number of the quoted verse.

<sup>14</sup> V. R. Mendoza, “‘Come Buy’: The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market””, *ELH*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (Winter, 2006), 913-47, (p. 916).

<sup>15</sup> W. W. Rossetti, Notes to *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti* by C. G. Rossetti (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1904), (p. 459).

Christina Rossetti suffered from depression throughout her life. She was diagnosed in her teens with 'hysteria' which was understood as 'a sign of dysfunctional femininity'.<sup>16</sup> The patriarchal medical advice was to encourage religiosity as a cure. A. Harrison declares:

It is tempting to see Rossetti's lifelong malaise as a manifestation of extreme sexual conflict and suppression [...]. Her condition was surely in part a product of the moral and religious values dominant in her cultural milieu (and to which she rigidly adhered) in combination with the authoritative influence of the Victorian medical establishment.<sup>17</sup>

Thus her poetry, including *Goblin Market*, is from a psychoanalytic perspective the creation and the outlet of the repressed fears and desires inside Rossetti's unconscious.<sup>18</sup>

The descriptions of the goblins in the poem are most intriguing. A feminist reader would recognize that they are the only males in the poem and no mention has been made of any normal men. On the other hand, a Marxist critic would notice that they are also merchants of suspicious exotic fruit and have the attributes of unusual animals, 'One had a cat's face, / One whisked a tail, / One tramped at a rat's pace, / One crawled like a snail,' 'one like a wombat' and 'one like a ratel.' (GM, 71-76) In fact the unsettling uncertainty of the nature of the 'goblin men', like many other things in the poem, fits very well with Freud's psychoanalytic definition of the uncanny, 'An uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed.'<sup>19</sup> The association of the goblins with inferior animals reflects how they represent in the author's unconscious the inferiority of men as well as merchants. Their classical chorus-like mode of talking and repeating their short resonant sentences, like in 'come buy, come buy' (GM, 90), also contributes to their uncanniness and demonstrates that they are all one and the same, without individual personalities. It is perhaps worth pointing out here that associating women and non-European races with animals to emphasise their inferiority was common practice in Victorian times by Orientalists and chauvinists.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Christina's brother, Dante, was one of those 'men' who ridiculed her and played on her insecurities. He caricatured her in 1862, 'showing

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<sup>16</sup> A. H. Harrison, 'Christina Rossetti: Illness and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 45 Issue 4 (Winter2007), pp.415-28., p. 423.

<sup>17</sup> A. H. Harrison, 'Christina Rossetti: Illness and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 45 Issue 4 (Winter2007), pp. 415-28, p. 421.

<sup>18</sup> A. H. Harrison, 'Christina Rossetti: Illness and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry* (Winter2007), Vol. 45 Issue 4, pp. 415-28, p. 426.

<sup>19</sup> S. Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', in *The Western Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by V. B. Leitch (London: Norton, 2001), pp. 929-52, p. 950.

<sup>20</sup> N. Tromans, 'Introduction: British Orientalist Painting', in *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), pp. 6-21, p. 20.

her having a tantrum after reading the Times Literary Review of her poetry'.<sup>21</sup> It is such practice that Rossetti seems to be unconsciously mirroring back against all men in *Goblin Market*, especially those whom she had to encounter in her life for medical and economic reasons. In her iconographic analysis, Megan A. Norcia associates the goblin cries, 'Come buy, Come buy', with the cries of nineteenth-century sellers on the streets of London. 'Born in London in 1830, Rossetti would have heard similar cries to the ones that drove Hogarth's musician to distraction [...], or motivated Thomas Carlyle to construct a soundproof study in the attic of his home.'<sup>22</sup>

The fruits these goblins sell are as uncanny as themselves, for not only are they of all shapes, colours and tastes, but they are also 'All ripe together / In summer weather' (*GM*, 15-16). A religious reader would without doubt make the association between such fruits and weather conditions on one hand and the paradise of Adam and Eve in *Genesis* on the other. The enchanting goblin cries, especially in the 'jingles' of 'Nay, take a seat with us, / Honour and eat with us' (*GM*, 368-69), are also very reminiscent of the tempting 'hiss[es]' of the snake in *Paradise Lost*,<sup>23</sup> itself a reproduction of the *Genesis* story as much as *Goblin Market* is Rossetti's unconscious recreation of her inner conflicts with Victorian social conventions. The fruits, ranging in colour from 'red' to its darkest shades, symbolise all levels of temptation and sexual passion, and remarkably the first fruit mentioned is 'apples'. The fruit, like the sellers who are both human and animal-like, are also a poison and an 'antidote'. Highlighting the rich intertextuality of *Goblin Market*, Mermin states:

The conflation of erotic and imaginative significance in a story about non-human objects of desire which exist outside of time recalls *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, whose victims eat strange fruit in fairyland and then loiter, turn pale, starve, and waste away, and also Tennyson's 'Tithonus' and (proleptically) 'The Holy Grail'.<sup>24</sup>

Laura, one of two living females in the main story, is quickly enchanted by the goblin's bewitching advertisements of their juicy fruits. Like Eve in paradise, Laura disobeys the warnings against the temptations of the goblin fruit. The imagery used here to describe Laura's pursuance of her desire for 'love' is clearly sexually charged in a way that combines phallic as well as female symbols, in a pattern that continues until the end of the poem.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck

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<sup>21</sup> 'A cartoon caricature of Christina Rossetti by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1862', *National Trust Prints*, <http://www.ntprints.com/image/420595/a-cartoon-caricature-of-christina-rossetti-by-her-brother-dante-gabriel-rossetti-1862>

<sup>22</sup> M. A. Norcia, M. A., "'Come Buy, Come Buy': Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' and the Cries of London", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2012), pp. 24-45, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 21, 130, 216, 230 & 231.

<sup>24</sup> D. Mermin, 'Heroic Sisterhood in "Goblin Market"', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1982), pp. 107-18, p. 108.

Like a rush-imbedded swan,  
 Like a lily from the beck,  
 Like a moonlit poplar branch,  
 Like a vessel at the Launch  
 When its last restraint is gone. (*GM*, 81-86)

The last line in the stanza is almost orgasmic and reflects Laura's intense sexual arousal as a majestic swan-like virgin by the possibilities of new experiences which her encounter with the 'goblin men' will reap. As soon as the goblins see Laura, they start 'signalling each other' in what seems to be a conspiratorial masculine brotherhood against their female customer. They start 'leering' and one of them weaves 'a crown'. By associating the metaphorical sexual connotations of the process of weaving with Laura's sexual arousal, it becomes unavoidable to understand the goblin market as one where goblins offer sexual services to women; an imaginary situation where goblin-men here, rather than real men, mirror street prostitutes in Victorian London. The psychoanalytic approach allows for reading this as another one of many disguise tactics in the poem, which Rossetti's unconscious utilises to release her repressed sexual desires and anxieties against men, economy and Victorian morality. Rossetti's unconscious, nevertheless, gives itself away occasionally in Freudian slips like 'Men sell not such in any town' (*GM*, 101).

The goblins do not seem interested in real money, which Laura does not possess, in exchange for their ready and 'ripe' 'fruit', but rather agree to take a 'golden curl' (*GM*, 125) in return. Gold and 'golden' objects and colours are a running motif throughout the poem, and would seem at first glance to be good material for a Marxist reader who would examine it in terms of sheer economic value and transaction. The goblins possess some golden 'plate(s)', and there also seems to be a lot of emphasis on the girls' 'golden head(s)'. When associated, however, with running motifs of female purity in the poem, such as 'lily' and 'swan', 'gold' starts to shine a different kind of lustre, especially that here it is 'hair' rather than actual gold. *Goblin Market* is not unique in using gold as such a symbol, other contemporary Victorian texts utilise it in the same sense. In George Elliot's *The Mill on the Floss* for instance, the chapter where Maggie passes from childhood to adolescence is titled 'The Golden Gates Are Passed'.<sup>25</sup> The fact that Laura's 'gold' is 'hair' on her head implies also that her innocence, virginity in this case, is mental as well as physical. In exchange for the sexual experience Laura has not just lost her virginity, being an inexperienced customer tricked into a very bad transaction, but also lost her soul and her economic and sexual independence. She becomes

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<sup>25</sup> George Elliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 208-18.

incapable the following day of accomplishing her domestic duties. Laura 'burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze' (*GM*, 292), but the goblins stop appearing to her since she has lost also her buying power as a customer and as a modest 'maiden'. She no longer can live and be accepted within the hypocritical religious conventions of Victorian society. Furthermore, phonemically the terms 'golden' and 'goblin' alliterate and rhyme each other like a pair of uncanny antonyms which semantically rely on and refute each other. The goblins seek the purity they don't have and the moment they cease it, it ceases to exist.

Laura returns home after sucking 'fruit globes fair or red' (*GM*, 128), and the first thing Lizzie tells her is she 'should not stay so late / twilight is not good for maidens.' (*GM*, 144) What Lizzie does not realize at this stage is that Laura has already lost her maidenhood. Lizzie reminds Laura of Jeanie, 'Who for joys brides hope to have / Fell sick and died. / In her gay prime.' (*GM*, 313-16) Jeanie, a Lady-of-Shallotte figure,<sup>26</sup> is a reminder to both sisters of the dangers of facing the patriarchal commercial world alone and of the fatality of succumbing to sexual desires towards men. Being a third female in the fairy-tale, she also serves to disturb the binary order of gender. Jeanie may well have been inspired by real fallen women whom Rossetti supported in real life. These fallen women's failure to adhere to Victorian moral codes and the punishment they faced by being shunned away from society was a deterrent to Rossetti from taking the same path depicted in Laura's behaviour.<sup>27</sup>

Lizzie then takes her sister to bed and the stanza that follows is a very suggestive one of queer sexual love. It starts and ends with what seems to be a disguised depiction of female genitalia, 'Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest / Folded in each other's wings.' (*GM*, 184-86) Then 'Cheek to cheek and breast to breast / Locked together in one nest.' (*GM*, 197-98) The female imagery at the top and bottom of the stanza is penetrated by several phallic symbols: 'Like two blossoms on one stem / Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow, / Like two wands of ivory / Tipped with gold for awful kings.' (*GM*, 188-191) Such beautiful and meaningful androgynous imagery, where the two sisters turn to both phallic and female symbols, foreshadows an efficient level of feminist, queer and sexual 'self-sufficiency' the sisters achieve towards the end of their story within the poem, 'a vision of the Pre-Raphaelite world from a woman's point of view'.<sup>28</sup>

In order to save Laura from a similar fate to Jeanie's, Lizzie leaves the protected female sphere and enters the masculine goblin world to buy some fruit. She takes with her a 'silver penny' (*GM*,

<sup>26</sup> Alfred Tennyson, *Selected Poems: Tennyson* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 8-12.

<sup>27</sup> E. K. Helsinger, 'Consumer Power and the Utopia of Desire: Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"', *ELH*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 903-33, p. 908.

<sup>28</sup> D. Mermin, 'Heroic Sisterhood in "Goblin Market"', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1982), pp. 107-18, p. 108.



324) which seems to have become a mystery to a lot of readers. When Marxist readers interpret it purely as an economic transaction, they face a dilemma with the goblins’ return of the penny. Feminist readers try to understand it as a sign of Lizzie’s superiority over the goblins, associating her tossing of the silver penny with royal figures in the ‘Maundy Thursday ceremony’ tossing minted money to their subjects.<sup>29</sup> Such a feminist reading, however, overlooks the fact that it is an economic transaction as well. Combining Marxist and feminist interpretations with a Christian reading of the ‘silver penny’, helps to solve the mystery in a way that would even support a queer reading of subsequent events in the poem. Mendoza associates Lizzie’s ‘silver penny’ with Christ’s parable of the silver coin as follows, ‘What Lizzie arms herself with [...] may in fact be the knowledge of and, more importantly, the faith in the redemption that the parable exemplifies and therefore supplies.’<sup>30</sup> Thus Lizzie’s ‘silver penny’ acts both as a monetary price, to use in the transaction without harming her independent female integrity, and a redemption ticket for the sins she and Laura are undertaking unwillingly against their queer female paradise. It becomes apparent here that it would be completely superficial to examine ‘silver’ and ‘gold’, in *Goblin Market*, from a purely Marxist perspective due to their rich and multi-layered meanings in terms of gender, sexuality and spirituality.

The goblins respond to Lizzie’s request in their uncanny classical Greek chorus style, ‘Nay, take a seat with us, / Honour and eat with us.’ (GM, 368-69) As clever merchants, they emphasise the value of their fruit, their sexual prowess, ‘Such fruits as these / No man can carry.’ (GM, 375-76) They invite Lizzie to try and judge for herself, ‘Sit down and feast with us,’ (GM, 380) but Lizzie being an inexperienced virgin customer, does not understand the fact that what is on offer here is not a product as much as a unique service and a whole experience. She tells them, ‘If you will not sell me any / Of your fruits though much and many, / Give me back my silver penny.’ (GM, 386-88) She crosses them and they molest her first, then rape her. Being half-animal half-men, they start, ‘Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,’ then they ‘tore her gown’ and ‘Twitched her hair out of the roots.’ (GM, 402-04) Lizzie’s ‘golden’ hair, like Laura’s, is also a symbol of her virginity, and the word ‘tore’ connotes that they have forcefully and disturbingly taken away from her something ‘as rare as pearl.’ (GM, 127)

The combination of Phallic and female imagery follows, for Lizzie stood ‘Like a lily in a flood’, ‘Like a beacon left alone / In a hoary roaring sea, / Sending up a golden fire.’ (GM, 409-14) She is also

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<sup>29</sup> R. J. Sowards, ‘Goblin Market’s Localism’, *Modern Philosophy*, Vol. 110 Issue 1 (August 2012), pp. 114-39, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> V. R. Mendoza, “‘Come Buy’: The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market””, *ELH*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (Winter, 2006), pp. 913-47, p. 929.

likened to 'a virgin town' with a 'gilded dome' (*GM*, 418-19), unfittingly reminiscent of the dome of pleasure in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. Lizzie fights back by shutting her 'mouth' from 'lip to lip' so that she does not let their juices enter her. She gets soaked with them instead, 'Of juice that syruped all her face, / And lodged in dimples of her chin, / And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.' (*GM*, 431-36) Frustrated for failing to obtain Lizzie's soul as well as her virginity, the goblins 'flung back her penny' (*GM*, 439) and leave. The 'silver penny', being returned to Lizzie, signifies her triumph in successfully protecting her soul (though not her body) and redeeming both herself and her sister for transgressing the rules of their female paradise.

Lizzie returns home and offers herself to Laura as an all-year ripe juicy fruit, a free-of-charge continuously available sexual fulfilment, thus defeating patriarchal commerce and the goblin market. 'Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices / Squeezed from goblin fruits for you' (*GM*, 468-69). Here Lizzie manages to transcend her gender, she returns from her traumatic experience, armed with knowledge, confidence and goblin juices; everything that would enable her to play the role of the spouse and the sexual partner to Laura. Lizzie complacently tells Laura, 'For your sake I have braved the glen, / And had to do with goblin merchant men' (*GM*, 473-74). At this point the two sisters realise that there is no need for men anymore in their lives, nor a place for the commercial side-effects of such a need. Now they don't have to sell themselves to greedy suitors nor deal with molesting sellers in the marketplace anymore.<sup>31</sup>

Lizzie and Laura make love to each other and the process is described in liberating terms, especially for Laura who ends up 'loathing the feast' (*GM*, 495) she has had with the goblins as she experiences a powerful orgasmic euphoria when 'swift fire spread through her veins' (*GM*, 507). Yet another sequence of androgynous imagery follows, 'Like the watch-tower of a town', 'Like a lightning-stricken mast, / Like a wind uprooted tree.' (*GM*, 514-17). At the end of the process she is reborn free of any addiction or need for 'men', 'Laura awoke as from a dream, / Laughed in an innocent old way.' (*GM*, 537-38) Thus the sisters' solidarity is accomplished. They are 'wives' (*GM*, 544) to each other, transcending their gender to fulfil each other's needs. With the aid of the goblin 'juices', they fertilize one another and uncannily give birth to a female-only offspring to whom Laura tells the story of *Goblin Market*. By telling the story to their daughters, Laura instils in the girls the importance of female solidarity and sisterhood for protecting and sustaining the economic, social and sexual independence of their female community from the external inferior, patriarchal, commercial world. She sums it up to their daughters in 'there is no friend like a sister.' (*GM*, 567)

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<sup>31</sup> M. A. Norcia, "Come Buy, Come Buy": Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' and the Cries of London', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2012), pp. 24-45, p. 36.

Like in *Noble Sisters* and *Maude*, Laura and Lizzie are two look-alike sisters, one extrovert and one introvert, one with no resistance to temptation and one who exerts self-restraint, one who adheres to rules and one who breaks them. In many ways, 'Laura and Lizzie represent an actively intelligent female mind torn between the two most obvious alternatives for a woman presented by a Victorian Society.'<sup>32</sup> The Victorian female in question here is evidently Rossetti herself. Moreover, the fairy tale of Laura and Lizzie is told to their daughters within the bigger story, which includes them as well as the children. This fairy tale takes place within *Goblin Market*, which is a poem published and sold in a religious patriarchal Victorian society by a poetess locked within her own limited sphere and whose desires are 'Locked together in one nest' (*GM*, 198). The 'nest' is undoubtedly Rossetti's unconscious. I have demonstrated above that Marxist, feminist, religious, erotic and queer readings of *Goblin Market* are plausible. Claiming exclusivity for any single one of them, however, over the 'one right total meaning' of the text would be doing *Goblin Market* great injustice and reducing its unique richness of meaning to something hardly above the ordinary. A psychoanalytic reading of *Goblin Market* is the necessary 'middle ground' to combine the multiplicity of meanings within the text. Furthermore, since Rossetti herself has emphasised that there are no deeper meanings to the text, a psychoanalytic reading of the poem seems to be the only way of providing credibility to all other readings of *Goblin Market*, through the realm of the unconscious.

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<sup>32</sup> E. Campbell, 'Of Mothers and Merchants: Female Economics in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 33 Issue 3 (Spring 1990), pp. 393-410, p. 400.

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